

F8045

THE IRISH QUESTION :

HON. EDWARD BLAKE'S SPEECH

IN THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS.

On Thursday, the 20th of April, 1882, a motion was made in the House of Commons for an Address to the Queen on the subject of Irish affairs. Hon. EDWARD BLAKE, leader of the Liberal party in Canada, made the following speech in the course of the debate :

Mr. BLAKE—If no other hon. member proposes to address the House on the subject, I do not, for my part, feel disposed to give a silent vote upon it. It is now two years ago since, in the course of a very important discussion here, I ventured to suggest in my place in Parliament that the accession to power, which had then recently taken place, of the Liberal Administration in England, would lead very shortly to the concession of some measure of Home Rule to the Irish people. I believe, as I said, that such a solution as could be obtained of the land question, such a solution as had been from time to time reached of other political questions, would, after all, not settle the Irish question, and that unless the dictates of prudence and of justice alike were observed and fulfilled by the granting to the Irish people of some measure of control over their local affairs, we would see that which has been the disgrace and the humiliation of the British Empire for many years still continued. I also stated, as the hon. gentleman in his speech and in his motion has observed, that we had one amongst many material interests here, in Canada, in the solution of that question, in the change which might be expected from it in the attitude of the great bulk of the Irish people towards the Empire, that we had a material—although I regard it as a much lesser interest than the interest which has been mainly discussed—we had a material interest of a serious character with reference to the chances and the opportunity of immigration to our soil, which will be impaired so long as the

LP
F5012
1882
B63I

present state of feeling shall continue. Now, I propose to justify the attitude which I took upon that occasion, and which did not then meet with any very animated response in the House or in the country ; I propose to justify it by a reference to some obvious historical facts which it appears to me can lead to only one inevitable conclusion. In order that we may understand the ground upon which, as I conceive, some action in this direction is demonstrably necessary, it is by no means needful to go further back than to the time of the Union.

THE MISRULE OF IRELAND.

It is not needful here to recur in detail to the more ancient events in connection with Irish history, to the history of the conquest, to the history of the confiscations, to the history of the proscriptions, to the history of the penal laws—directed at one time against Protestants, and at one time against Catholics—to the history of those penal laws, and of those events of the most serious and terrible description, laws and events to which I have briefly alluded, but which ought to make us all, when we recur to them, blush with shame, which have left marks of human error and of human crime almost indelible, and enhancing, there can be no doubt, even to-day, the difficulties of the situation. I say it is needless for the purposes of this discussion that we should revert to these matters in detail, for I am willing that this question should be tried not upon the previous events, but upon the history of the past eighty years, upon the history of the government of Ireland under the present constitution of the United Kingdom. That history begins with the Union Act—an Act secured, as we all know, by means of the basest bribery and corruption. However beneficial the public men who carried that measure may have believed it to be, I do not suppose it will be urged to-day that the end justified the means, and I have myself a strong belief that the nefarious means by which that measure was carried operated very largely to increase the difficulties of its working, and produced a state of feeling which gave it but a poor chance of being satisfactory to the people of the country which was by such means brought into more intimate connection with Great Britain. But, Sir, since that period, for a little more than eighty years has Ireland been managed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom ; and I do not hesitate to say that

THE RESULT OF THAT MANAGEMENT

has been a dreadful failure. There has been time enough to try the question out. Eighty years in the history of a country, and such an eighty years as Ireland has experienced, is surely time enough to try the question out. Now, let us apply some obvious, plain and palpable tests as to whether there has been a good and successful administration of Irish affairs under the

existing system. The population of Ireland in 1726 was 2,300,000; in 1805, a few years after the Union, it was 5,400,000; and that increase, more than doubling, occurred during a time of difficulty, of religious proscription, and of emigration. In 1841 the population had abnormally increased under circumstances which it is not necessary to discuss, but it had increased to the number of 8,200,000. But since 1841 the history of Ireland has been a history of periodical distress, of famine, of eviction, and of emigration, and the result is that the population, which in 1841 stood at 8,200,000, stands to-day at 5,160,000 only, or 240,000 less than eighty years ago, at the time of the Union, and 3,000,000 less than it was forty years ago. In the last thirty years, from 1851 to 1881, there has been an emigration from that country of no less than 2,750,000 souls! Now,

IT MAY BE SAID THAT IRELAND IS OVER-CROWDED.

I deny that Ireland, as a whole, is over-crowded. There are parts of Ireland in which the distribution of the population is probably too dense; but I maintain that, judging by all the tests which we can reasonably apply to it, Ireland, as a country, is not an over-crowded country. The number of inhabitants to the square mile in France is 180; Italy, 225; Belgium, 421; Flanders, 718; England and Wales, 442; in the whole of Great Britain, 333; in Ireland, only 161. The area of Ireland is 20,325,000 acres, of which there are at present arable 13,465,000 acres, and there is an additional area easily made available for tillage of 4,000,000 acres more, making a total of land actually arable and available for tillage of 17,465,000 acres. How many acres are actually cultivated at this time? Only 5,200,000! And this is the case with respect to a country of which the soil is indubitably very fertile, which has raised in times past enormous crops, comparing favourably with the crops at the same time raised in England, of wheat, rye, barley, peas, beans, potatoes, and turnips; and no one doubts the capacity of Ireland for raising cattle. That country has very great natural advantages. It has great quantities of bog land from which is produced a very cheap fuel, and which lands, when reclaimed, are inferior to none in the world, whether as wheat or as pasture lands. It has splendid coal fields, although these are hardly used at all. It has magnificent, perhaps unequalled fisheries in regard to the quantities of fish caught, and the harbour and other facilities in connection with the industry. It is possessed of valuable mines of gypsum, gold, silver, lead, copper, and zinc. It has, besides, great facilities for manufacturing, both as regards facilities for the transport of manufactured goods, for the supply of raw material, and for the cheapness of the labour to be employed. It has, moreover, great abundance of splendid water-power, facilitating the manufacture

of the raw material into the perfected article. It is inhabited by a people confessedly very free from crime of the ordinary kind ; a people which, whatever their prospects and chances and capacities may have been demonstrated to be in their own country, have shown in every other country than Ireland that they possess the capacity to rise, and, by their industry, their ability, and their force of character, to take their own place and rank in the world, wherever their lot may be cast. They are also a people confessedly of a nature kindly, affectionate, gentle, and grateful ; and possessing, in a large degree, the organ of veneration, they are easily impressed by any act of kindness shown towards them.

WHY HAS POPULATION DIMINISHED ?

With such a people, with such a soil, with such natural advantages, how does it come that we have such a result, with respect to population, as I have mentioned ? How does it come to pass that the population of Ireland should have diminished instead of increased, that the emigration should have been so great, and that the condition of the country should be such as we know it to be ? To what is due the chronically wretched state of Ireland—its miseries, social, material and political ? Although there may be, although there has been, as we all rejoice to know, some improvement in the physical condition of some portion of the population during the last few years, that remains to-day a pressing question, and no man holds that the condition of Ireland is satisfactory when viewed in any of those aspects to which I have referred. The condition of the people materially, as well as in other respects, is one which ought to create in all of us who call ourselves British subjects a feeling of shame. I say that the condition of Ireland to-day is due largely to the want of security and contentment, to the want of identification with the soil and of attachment to the Constitution, to the want of that hope of improvement and of bettering their condition, which is really the most essential thing to induce men to labour. I say that it is due to a feeling that their grievances are not redressed to the lack of a belief that their government is conducted according to their needs and wishes, and to the want of any machinery for the local management of their local affairs. There can be no doubt that Ireland, at and before the time of the Union, was subject to some great political grievances. There can be no doubt that those grievances were not of a sentimental character, but were such as are to-day acknowledged to be wrongs which demanded the attention of legislators, and should have been redressed by legislation.

THE PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND.

If you go back to the history of the parliamentary government of Ireland for the last eighty years, and if you begin your

enquiry by reference to those great and important landmarks or grievances, and proceed to enquire as to the time when, and the circumstances under which, those grievances have been, so far as they have been, redressed, you will find a very good reason there, if you seek no further, for a deep-seated and justifiable dissatisfaction as to the parliamentary government of Ireland by the Parliament of the United Kingdom. There was the great question—at that time as much as at any later time a question of justice and of right—of Roman Catholic emancipation. There was the question—at that time as much a question of justice and of right as at any later time—of the disestablishment and disendowment of the State or dominant Church of the minority. There was the question—a question which we should here, in a happier land, call a lamentable question, but still in the condition of the country none the less a pressing question—of a proper measure for the relief of the poor, required because of the unnatural conditions that ruled the distribution of the land. There was the question of

REFORM OF THE LAND LAWS,

by the creation of a proper interest in the soil by those who occupied the soil. There was the question of creating local institutions to manage local affairs, rendered all the more important because of the abrogation of the rights of the Parliament of Ireland and the transfer to Westminster of the management of those minor affairs which, up to that time, were under the control of the Legislature which sat in the capital city of Ireland. These leading questions, to which I have referred, have been in part—all but the last one, which has never been substantially dealt with—disposed of, and it may be asked, since such is the fact, Why do I refer to them? I refer to them because I see that the circumstances under which, and the time at which those questions were dealt with, demonstrate more clearly than anything else can do the unsatisfactory character of the government of Ireland by the Parliament of the United Kingdom. When was the question of Roman Catholic emancipation dealt with? It was not dealt with until nearly thirty years after the time of the Union. Thirty years is about a generation, and it required about a generation for the Parliament of the United Kingdom to nerve itself to the task of dealing with that question. And how was it even then granted? Was it granted then as the boon of a cheerful giver? No, Sir. It was granted grudgingly and of necessity. It was granted, avowedly granted by the Ministry, because

THEY WERE FORCED TO DO IT,

not because it was just; for they had been proclaiming to the ends of the earth that it was not just. Not because it was right, for they had been proclaiming that it was wrong. It

was granted because, as they themselves stated in Parliament, the question was between granting that concession and civil war. Things had come to such a pass that there was to be an immediate outbreak, a civil war, unless Roman Catholic emancipation was granted. Well, Sir, did that do good? Of course you could not remove, even under such circumstances, a monstrous injustice of that description without some good being done; but I say the good was minimized by the delay which took place, and by the attitude assumed by those who received and by those who gave that concession. The Irish people were taught that dreadful lesson, so far as the administration of the Parliament of the United Kingdom could teach it to them, that England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity. They were taught this by the delay, and by the disposition with and the compulsion on which those Ministers acceded to the grant. They were taught to rely not upon that constitutional agitation which is the proud basis of our system, and in which every one is free to engage, but upon other and worse methods of accomplishing reforms, upon unconstitutional proceedings approaching to revolt. I say that no doubt something was done by the removal, even under those circumstances, of

THAT GREAT BLEMISH,

yet nothing was done toward improving or conciliating the feeling of the Irish people, towards leading them to believe that they had a right to expect from the unconstrained sense of justice of the British Parliament the relief to which they had a right; or towards obtaining those golden fruits which might have been reaped from a great act of justice cheerfully performed, in good season. The next measures of relief for Ireland—and I am dealing now only with the remedial legislation—I am dealing only with those measures to which the English Parliament may point with the greatest pride as monuments of its parliamentary government of Ireland—the next great measures of remedial legislation occurred, how long after? Nearly twenty years after. It was not until nearly twenty years had elapsed that we had the measure for the relief of the poor to which I have referred, followed shortly by, and intended at the time to be followed as soon as possible by the Act for the sale of encumbered estates. The years 1846 and 1849 are, I think, the years in which those two measures were passed; one nearly twenty years after the Emancipation Bill, and the other a few years later. These Acts, as I have said, did not deal with matters of a late date, they were not the offspring of fresh occurrences recently developed. They were the attempt by the Parliament of the United Kingdom to deal with old and long-standing difficulties, and how again was it that they were brought about? How was it that the public opinion of

the British people and the opinion of the Parliament of the United Kingdom was aroused to action, such action as was then taken in these two particulars? Sir, it was not the hand of the insurgent upon that occasion, it was not the hand of the agitator, so much as

THE HAND OF SUFFERING, OF FAMINE,

and of pestilence. It was not until the direst calamity which has beset the modern Christian world came upon us, and until a famine took place in which more human lives were lost than in all the wars with which England has reddened the soil of Europe and the world, it was not until that had happened, that the public opinion to which I have referred was sufficiently aroused to deal with this question. Such was the unhappy condition of Ireland at that time, and the measure passed for the relief of the poor was a great boon to them, though productive later on of some unforeseen and unfortunate results. The Encumbered Estates Act, too, was greatly needed for the relief of landlords, mortgagees, and creditors. It was hoped, however, that that Act would have had an indirect effect very beneficial to the tenants, but that hope failed. The condition of the tenants on the whole was not mitigated by the practical operation of the Act, because it happened that the sales of many of the lands under the Encumbered Estates Act were made to persons entirely new to the country, and who, in a great many instances, were wholly neglectful and defiant of those customary—I cannot call them rights—but those customary favours which were granted by the former proprietors to the tenants; and thus the system of rack-renting, and the other difficulties which might naturally be expected to grow from such an unnatural system as existed, were aggravated and intensified by the new proprietary; and so it happened that the demand for tenant right became—pressing as it was before—became still more pressing by reason of the practical operation of the Encumbered Estates Act. Well, Sir, about twenty years more elapsed before the next great remedial measure for Ireland was carried through the British Parliament. It was, I think, in 1869 that the law for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church was passed, nearly fifty years after the Union took place. Now, who can pretend that that act of justice was not as much an act of justice at the time of the Union as it was at the date at which it became law? The principles on which the disestablishment was carried are immutable and eternal, and the question had been raised, as we all know, generations before. Public men in advance of the public opinion of the United Kingdom and of Parliament—intelligent men, statesmen, had raised it, had pointed out that it was impossible that that establishment could be defended and maintained—had proposed that an act of justice should be

performed, but it was utterly impossible to make progress in that direction. An old, old grievance, a grievance so old as to be almost out of date, a grievance of the most pressing character—how, I ask, was the redress of that grievance obtained? Now, Sir, I shall give you an authentic account of how it came that Parliament and the people of the United Kingdom at length decided to

REMOVE THAT ANCIENT GRIEVANCE.

I shall give you the account which the author of that great measure for Ireland himself gave in 1878, in the Mid-Lothian campaign. These are the words Mr. Gladstone used in explaining how it came about that the Irish Church was in 1869 disestablished and disendowed :

“Down to the year 1865, and the dissolution of that year, the whole question of the Irish Church was dead. Nobody cared for it. Nobody paid any attention to it in England. Then circumstances occurred which drew the attention of the people to the Irish Church. I said myself, in 1865, and I believed, that it was out of the range of practical politics—that is, the politics of the coming elections.”

Now, what was it that brought it within the range of practical politics? what was it made it possible to carry that measure of reform? Some new events, some new chain of reasoning that led to the conviction on the part of the people that it was a just measure? I will read you what it was :

“When it came to this, that a great gaol in the heart of the metropolis was broken open under circumstances which drew the attention of the English people to the state of Ireland; and when in Manchester policemen were murdered in the execution of their duty, at once the whole country became alive to Irish questions, and the question of the Irish Church revived. It came within the range of practical politics.”

That—that is the reason by which the people and politicians of the United Kingdom were led to the belief that this great question had come within the range of practical politics, and were led to see what was their duty to the people of Ireland. Once again there was the same moving cause of the remedy; once again there was the same long, heart-breaking delay; and once again English and Scotch opinion would not act until compelled to do so. Once again, therefore, there was no meed of grace in the measure so obtained. It was forced from the British Parliament, and was so acknowledged, and therefore while it did remove the grievance, it did not—as timely and cheerful legislation would have done—as action based on considerations of justice would have done—contain the element of grace, and so it did not excite a feeling of gratitude in the hearts of those to whom the benefit was granted. Sir, that measure was a great measure in two distinct aspects. First of all, it destroyed the pre-eminence of the Church of the minority.

It removed a crying injustice ; it changed a condition which had combined the religion of the majority with their patriotism—a patriotism which, so long as it was the policy of the Parliament and people of the United Kingdom to maintain the dominance of the Church of the minority, was necessarily an anti-national patriotism. Besides that, there was the material gain that Irish funds, to the amount of many millions, were set free for legitimate and proper Irish purposes, not denominational, not sectarian, not for the minority, not for the majority, but for the whole people. Besides all these direct results of the

DISESTABLISHMENT AND DISENDOWMENT

of the Irish Church, it had an indirect effect hardly less important. It was the first practical measure for giving to the occupiers of the soil a real and tangible interest in the soil, and for increasing the number of Irish proprietors. The just provision which gave to the tenants on Church lands the pre-emptive right to purchase those lands on moderate terms, a very small sum being payable down, and the residue being spread over instalments for thirty-two years, compounding principal and interest at a low rate, which made the annual payment not materially more than the accustomed rent, gave the tenants of Church lands an opportunity, of which they gladly availed themselves, to become the owners of the lands they occupied. And thus it added no less than 5,000 to the number of Irish proprietors of the soil. With our notions, having regard to the figures I have given as to the population, you may say that 5,000 Irish proprietors is a trifle. What is the use of saying so much about 5,000 more Irish proprietors ? I admit that it is a drop in the bucket, but then the bucket had very little more than a drop or two in it at the time. The

TOTAL NUMBER OF IRISH PROPRIETORS

at that time was about 16,000 ; so that this act in its operation added no less than 5,000, or very nearly one-third, to the number of Irish proprietors ; and a measure which had such an effect cannot but be regarded as a very important measure of relief. This touches the core of the Irish question—the *land*. Now, Sir, Ireland is a country of small agricultural holdings, and in considering this question, we must not forget that circumstance. There are in Ireland no less than 533,000 distinct farm tenancies, of which no less than 450,000 are under 50 acres, and no less than 50,000 more are between 50 and 100 acres, showing that the great bulk are under fifty acres, and as many as 500,000 out of the total 533,000 are under 100 acres. Although there are exceptions, as we know, principally in one of the provinces of Ireland, but also in the case of many estates scattered through other parts of that country,

yet the bulk of these 533,000 holdings are yearly, and they are yearly in a country in which the custom has been that the tenant shall make the improvements, a custom which is wholly incompatible with the conditions of yearly tenancy. Now, Sir, while that is

THE NUMBER OF IRISH FARM TENANCIES,

let us see to what extent the separate ownership of farm lands prevails. In Ireland, one in every 257 persons owns farm lands, while in France one in every eight persons owns farm lands. In central and northern Europe the tenure of land is widely diffused ; and while we have seen a very gradual growth and a very imperfect development, in the continental countries of Europe of the principles of popular and responsible government—while in that regard they are far behind the United Kingdom, yet we have seen, since the days of the French revolution and the Napoleonic age, large advances made—much larger advances than have been ever dreamed of in England towards the diffusion of the tenure of land, and the abolition of that most objectionable portion of the feudal system. In the Rhine Provinces, including Westphalia, there are 11,000,000 acres of cultivable land—and how many proprietors ? 1,157,000 proprietors, or one to every ten acres of land ; and if you read the history of the contentment and comfort, the work and labour, the energy and industry—the indomitable industry—that is displayed in many of these countries by the proprietors of these small areas, you must be convinced that the only thing that enables the Government of these countries to be carried on at all, burdened as they are with heavy taxes and enormous expenses, with an imperfect development of constitutional government, with great military armaments, and with an oppressive system of conscription and military service—the only thing that gives the people heart and hope, and enables them to struggle on at all, is that wide diffusion of the ownership of land than which there is nothing better calculated to promote the stability of the people to whom the land belongs. Take the State of New York, in which there are 22,200,000 acres of farm lands, and in which the holdings are large, as is natural in a new country, where there is so much land undisposed of as there is on this continent. There the owners of the land, in 1870, were 216,000, against 21,000 in Ireland, including the owners of Church lands. Look at two portions of Ireland, which may be selected as examples : take the agricultural counties of Meath, Westmeath and Cavan, which comprise 1,360,000 acres, and in which there are only 612 owners of less than 50 acres each in the whole district. Take again the mountainous districts of Galway and Mayo, containing 2,760,000 acres, and there are only 225 owners of less than 50 acres each.

THE NUMBER OF SMALL OWNERS

is insignificant in England, but that number is computed to be about ten times as large in proportion as the number is in Ireland, and that in a country of which I believe the greatest practical blemish to-day is its bad land laws. I believe there can be no doubt that the greatest practical blemish in England and Scotland to-day is the condition of the ownership of land ; but even in England that difficulty is insignificant relatively to the condition of things in Ireland. Now, Sir, there can be no doubt that the old penal laws, which, among other relics of barbarity, prohibited for a long time Roman Catholics either from owning or inheriting lands, had much to do with the creation of the present state of things as to land-holding in Ireland, and that state of things being once created and marked deeply upon the country, it became of course proportionably difficult to obliterate it.

THE RESULT WAS A PRACTICAL SERFDOM;

the people who cultivated the lands were only left enough to subsist on in a miserable manner. All concede that there were many landlords in Ireland who granted proper leases, and behaved with propriety towards their tenantry ; yet in the main, and subject to these exceptions, the practical result was that the whole profit of the lands, with the exception of a poor, miserable subsistence to the tenant who worked them, went to the landlord ; and the further result was, that where improvements were made an early opportunity was taken to increase the rental of the lands to the extent to which they had become capable of increased production, by virtue of the improvements which the tenant and his family had made. This was a state of things which of course did not merely diminish, but destroyed, that hope of bettering himself which is the spur by which you can expect to urge men to rise, and under the influence of which you can expect happiness and contentment to be diffused. The first or one of the earliest writers on the subject of land-holding—Young, I think—says : “ Give a man a nine years’ lease of a garden, and he will turn it into a desert ; give him a freehold of the naked rock, and in nine years he will turn it into a garden ; ” and I believe that not untruly represents, in a general sense, the relative condition of things between the short holder under the customs that prevail in Ireland, and the proprietor who occupies the land. Now, that situation would have been bad enough if the rents so exacted from the tenantry were rents in any proper sense of the term ; but the

WHOLE PRODUCE OF THE SOIL WENT ELSEWHERE

beyond a sum enough, not to enable the unfortunate people to clothe themselves, but to live in rags—not to feed

themselves, but to keep starvation from them. Beyond that sum, the whole of the produce of the soil was taken by the landlords, and, worse again, by landlords who, as a rule, did not live in the country, because a certain measure of improvement and prosperity would necessarily have arisen from the expenditure on the soil of those enormous rents. But to make a condition miserable enough, God knows, without it still more miserable, the bulk of those who received these rents were absentee landlords; and so it happened that, speaking once again in the main, not merely a fair share and proportion of the produce of the soil, but the whole produce of the soil of Ireland, with but wretched livings for those who raised it, went away from Ireland—was rather a tribute paid by Ireland to foreign countries, than legitimately applied within the land itself—an application which would have occasioned the development of trade and manufactures, which would have given more employment, agriculturally as well as otherwise, and produced some mitigating circumstances at any rate to relieve the darkness of the picture to which I have referred. I say it happened there was

LUXURY FOR THE ABSENTEE LANDLORD,

misery for the resident tenant, as the rule, and that too in a country of which it has been said, not I believe rhetorically, but in sober truth, that if you wiped out the tenants' improvements you would convert nine-tenths of Ireland into a desert again. I have said enough to show that the question of the land is the core of the Irish question, and to show how great was the importance of any measure, such as the Irish Church Act, which should have tended even in a moderate degree to unite the diverse interests of the occupant and of the land he occupied, and to create a landed proprietary in Ireland. That measure was followed within a year or two by the Land Act of 1870, an Act which was, no doubt, a useful Act, and which was, probably, in effect I have no doubt, quite as strong and sweeping a measure as the public opinion to which I have referred of the people of the United Kingdom would suffer to be passed at that day, but which, in consequence of that public opinion not being sufficiently appreciative of the situation, was far behind what the necessities of the situation called for. Now, both

THE CHURCH AND THE LAND ACT

were brought about, not from a sense of the justice of either or both measures—were brought within the domain of practical politics, not because interested or selfish landlords or wealthy men had come to the conclusion, from some new turn of reasoning, that the condition of Ireland was one of injustice, and of misery that required amelioration, but because a great gaol in

the heart of London was broken open, and some policemen in Manchester were killed. That it was this that aroused England's attention to Irish affairs, and rendered possible those measures of reform, is beyond doubt. Once again the same fatal error—once again justice and measures of propriety and prudence were too long delayed, and once again were those lessons taught the Irish people which bore for so many years such fatal fruits. That Land Act was useful in its way, but it was not wide enough; the land clauses known as Bright's, most hopeful in theory, which struck directly at the root of the question, turned out in practice not so useful as the land clauses with reference to the Irish Church, owing to differences of condition. The truth was, that in other respects

THE LAND LAWS OF IRELAND,

as of England and Scotland, were grievously defective, and the expense of a voluntary transfer of land in small parcels was almost prohibitory. The search for titles, and copies and conveyances, and conveyancing itself, were so costly that whatever price you might fix for those moderate portions of land, which were the utmost aspiration of the occupant, would in many cases fail to meet the expenses of conveyancing. That was one difficulty with which the legislation was unable to grapple. There was another, in the want of sympathy on the part of the Treasury and other departments of the Government with those clauses which savoured a little too much, in the then public opinion of the country, of interference with the sacred property in land—which looked a little too much towards a denial of the

DIVINE RIGHT OF LANDLORDISM,

which looked a little too much like a practical recognition of the motto that property has its duties as well as its rights; and so it happened in practice that there were but 100 sales a year on the average, or a total of 800, by the last return I have been able to obtain, under the provisions of the land clauses of the Act of 1870. So, therefore, you will observe that the Act was defective as a remedy for the evils complained of, and, by experience, was proved to be wholly inadequate. Then, in 1880, the last Land Act was passed, under continual pressure—under similar pressure, increased and aggravated by events; a great measure, but by itself not likely, finally, to settle the great question. I will not discuss the complicated details of that measure; but I will say that a measure which is based upon the ground and founded upon the reason upon which that measure depends, and which makes no provision at all for dealing with cases of arrears of rents, cannot be regarded as a final or satisfactory measure, if there were no other defect. If you look at the history of the ills which preceded that measure,

and at the circumstances of the country, as stated by its authors, you will see that such a measure must be to a large extent wholly inadequate, and entirely beyond practical application towards many of the most grievous cases that can be supposed to exist under it, unless it deals with arrears for some time back. The most grievous cases will be those of parties unable to pay their rents. However, no one can doubt but that that measure was

AN IMMENSE ACT OF RELIEF,

that it was a measure that gave more than was expected by many, or was thought possible to be obtained from the Parliament of the United Kingdom, and nobody can doubt either that it was obtained from that Parliament only by continued difficulties. The state of Ireland, as it had been, was becoming more aggravated still. Things were growing worse and worse before the adoption of this last remedial measure and the conviction at length impressed itself on the United Kingdom that something more must be done to remedy those evils. But the same fatal errors which attended the agitation for the introduction of the previous remedial measures attended this. It came so late that a large portion of the benefit was lost, so far as feeling was concerned, and so far as the conviction might have been created that Ireland could depend on the justice of the Parliament of the United Kingdom for any prospect of an ending to its sufferings. In these respects this last remedial measure had wholly lost its grace. I say it is as plain as the day that true statesmanship pointed to earlier action—to action under other and different circumstances, when a measure, even less thorough-going than this one, would have produced an amelioration in the condition and temper of the people of that country much greater than could be expected from the measure brought in and carried at the time, under the circumstances and under the pressure which attended its becoming law. That is

THE RECORD OF EIGHTY YEARS

of remedial legislation for Ireland. These are the important landmarks—the great acts for the remedy of wrongs, and the chief grants of justice that have distinguished British legislation for Ireland in the past eighty years. There are others, no doubt, subsidiary acts. It did not take quite so long—I forget whether more than a couple of Parliaments—to induce the Parliament of the United Kingdom to pass a Sunday Closing Act, which was demanded by the unanimous voice of the Irish population, and was applicable to them only, but which did not agree with the sentiments of the British publican, and which, therefore, it was thought wrong to give to the Irish people. But it came at last, and minor measures of this description have come

to Ireland from time to time; but the large and important measures of statesmanship which have agitated the public mind are those to which I have referred, and these have been accomplished only after the delays and under the circumstances I have briefly stated. Can anybody wonder then that there should have grown up early, and that there should continue with an ever-increasing volume and urgency,

A CRY FOR A MEASURE OF HOME RULE?

Put the question to ourselves. If we had been for eighty years in the position that these people have been in for that time; if we had had to agitate for a whole generation for one measure of justice, for three-quarters of a generation for the next measure, and two-thirds of a generation for the third; if as each of these measures had been obtained, it was seen to be due, not to the recognition of the justice of our cause, but to the recognition of the danger of further delay, what would have been our feelings, and how earnestly would we have demanded some portion of control over our affairs? But there is a darker side to the picture than this. While remedies were refused, force was at the same time constantly applied. While you have the miserable record of remedial Acts to which I have referred, you have the still more miserable record of Arms Acts, Coercion Acts, Restraint of the Press Acts, Suspension of Habeas Corpus Acts, and all those legislative means of restraining the people passed from time to time with the utmost freedom by the same Parliament which was denying and delaying what is now admitted to have been only justice to that people. I do not mean to say that the conduct of the Irish people—a large portion of it—under these circumstances was justifiable. Far from it. I do not mean to say that it may not have been necessary sometimes to pass these Acts.

TRUE FRIENDS OF IRELAND

have from time to time concurred in their passage. But I do mean to say that the condition of things enduring for eighty years, with such a record on its brighter side of remedial legislation and such a record on its darker side of coercive legislation, affords absolute proof that the experiment of local government for Ireland by the Parliament of the United Kingdom has been a disastrous failure. Besides legislative coercion, there were other methods of coercion employed. There is an army, under the guise of a constabulary, of 12,000 or 13,000 of, I suppose, the best troops in the world, the Irish constabulary; and we have had from time to time large portions of the military forces of the Empire quartered in Ireland. From time to time not less than 50,000 men—I believe to-day not less than 50,000 men of the British army—are stationed in Ireland to keep the people down, and large detachments of the British

fleet frequent Irish harbours for the same purpose. Whether right or wrong in this controversy, it cannot be contended that the government of Ireland for eighty years has been a government by constitutional means, but it must be admitted that it has been a government by force. That is, in the large, the result of the whole business. Now at length it is acknowledged—as the hon. member for Victoria has said, freely and frankly acknowledged—that Ireland was being misgoverned all those years.

WHAT A HUMILIATING POSITION

is that which the mother of Parliaments, the mother of constitutional freedom throughout the world, occupies on this question! Which of us did not feel with a pang of humiliation the keen shaft of the satirist who not long since forged, to to speak, the letter from the Sultan of Turkey, calling, in response to some calls that had been made by England on him to remedy some grievances of his subjects—calling on the British Government to remedy the condition of the Irish people? Who did not feel that such a letter might have been fairly written, that such a complaint might have been fairly made, and that the argument so often urged in this House of *tu quoque* might have been fairly used? Of the dreadful results of all this it is needless to speak. No doubt Ireland is largely in a state of anarchy, ruled, as far as the United Kingdom is concerned, mainly by force, and so far as a large portion of the people is concerned, mainly by organizations without and beyond the control of the law; and I maintain that it is the delays which have taken place in their passage, and the circumstances under which these measures of pressing justice and importance have been at length granted, which are largely responsible for the distressed condition of that country.

THERE WERE TWO REASONS FOR THESE DELAYS :

Reformers—and I do not use the word in a party sense, or as defining wholesale the Reform party of Britain, as compared with the Conservative party, though I might so use it; but still there have been honourable exceptions in the Conservative party—Reformers, in the larger sense of the term, have from time to time pressed upon the public and upon Parliament, long before these reforms were granted, their justice and necessity; but the great body of public opinion was unquestionably hostile to Irish reform. In a Parliament of the United Kingdom, in which, under our constitutional system, the opinion of the majority must rule, it was impossible that considerations of justice or expediency to which the majority were not alive could be recognized in time. I believe that long ago many of these measures would have been attempted by far-sighted statesmen, except that they felt it was impossible to carry them, except that

they were, as Mr. Gladstone has put it, beyond the realm of practical politics, because the aristocratic interest, the large land-holding interest, the Conservative interest, and many other interests were hostile and entirely too strong to allow the relatively small band of advanced Reformers to carry them into effect in due season. In a word, the public opinion of the United Kingdom did not recognize the importance of the subject, and was not sufficiently advanced to discharge the duty of efficiently managing Irish affairs. The second difficulty was the want of time. Parliament has been overweighted with its multitudinous concerns; it has had to deal with

LARGE IMPERIAL CONCERNS,

it has had to deal with local concerns which were supposed to be more pressing, and it has been unequal to its task. We know that for a great many years Parliament has been unequal to its task in this regard. We know that measures have been brought in by strong Governments session after session, and have been just crushed out by the pressure of other affairs—have not even reached the stage of effective discussion. It takes years, as a rule, before that which is deemed sufficiently ripe for legislation to be actually brought into Parliament by a Government on its responsibility, can reach that stage of discussion unless there be some extraordinary reason of urgency such as has lately attended the Irish question. It has thus happened that men have been too apt to say with reference to the large questions to which I have referred, and which have come up for settlement: “Oh, that question is not yet within the range of practical politics,” just as Mr. Gladstone said on the Irish question in 1865; and so they say of these questions until gunpowder, murder, assassination, explosions, a condition of chronic disaffection breaking out with peculiar violence in some particular manner, bring them to the conclusion forthwith that the question is

WITHIN THE RANGE OF PRACTICAL POLITICS,

and has got to be dealt with. Now, I say that even if Parliament would even now take up what it ought long ago to have taken up, the question of local government for Ireland, we might hope it would be dealt with in time to do good; but it also may, and I fear will, be dealt with so late as to obviate all chance of its settlement being productive of better feeling between the people of the two countries, and thus it is that I am brought to the conclusion that it is the duty of every man who entertains a strong feeling for the empire, who entertains a feeling of pride in its glories and of shame in its failures and its faults, to do what he can in his sphere towards pressing forward this Irish question to a solution while there yet be time. Now, so long ago as 1878 the statesman to whom I referred a

while ago, Mr. Gladstone, spoke in this manner prior to the general election which took place at that time :

“In the matter of Local Government there may be a solution of some national and even Imperial difficulties. * * * If you ask me what I think of Home Rule I must tell you that I will only answer you when you tell me how Home Rule is related to local government. I am friendly to local government, I am friendly to large local privileges and power, and I desire—I may almost say, I intensely desire—to see Parliament relieved of some portion of its duties. I see the efficiency of Parliament interfered with, not only by obstruction from Irish members, but even more grossly by the enormous weight which is placed upon the time and minds of those whom you have sent to represent you. We have got an overweighted Parliament, and if Ireland or any other portion of the country is desirous and able to arrange its affairs, that by taking the local part or part of its transactions off the hands of Parliament it can liberate and strengthen Parliament for Imperial concerns, I say I will not only accord a reluctant assent, but I will give a generous support to any such scheme.

“One limit, gentlemen, one limit only, I know to the extension of colonial government ; it is this, that nothing can be done in my opinion by any wise statesman or right-minded Briton to weaken the authority of the Imperial Parliament. Because the Imperial Parliament must be Imperial in the three Kingdoms, nothing that creates a doubt upon that supremacy can be tolerated by any intelligent and patriotic man. But, subject to that limitation, if we can make arrangements under which Ireland, Scotland, Wales and a portion of England, can deal with questions of local and special interest to themselves more effectually than Parliament now can, that, I say, will be the attainment of a great national good. The Scotch members who always show in Parliament—I must say, speaking of them as an average, and perhaps it is all the more true because the majority of them are Liberal—who always show in the transaction of Scotch business remarkable shrewdness and efficiency, yet all find cause to complain, and complain seriously and gravely, that they cannot get the Scotch business properly transacted.

“The Parliament is over-weighted. The Parliament is almost overwhelmed. If we could take off its shoulders that superfluous weight by the constitution of secondary and subordinate authorities, I am not going to be frightened out of a wise measure of this kind by being told that I am condescending to the prejudices of the Home Rulers. I will condescend to no such prejudices. I will consent to give to Ireland upon principle nothing that is not upon equal terms offered to Scotland and to the different portions of the United Kingdom. But I say that the man who starts to devise a machinery by which some portion of the excessive and impossible task, now laid upon the House of Commons, shall be shifted to the more free and therefore more efficient hands of secondary and local authority will confer a blessing upon this country that will entitle him to be ranked among the prominent benefactors of the land.”

I think, Sir, having regard to that speech, I was justified in hailing the accession to power of the Liberal party, as I did in the year 1880, as being an omen of some measure of redress for Ireland in this particular. But, Sir, another speech was delivered by that same statesman, under the responsibility of office, in the Imperial House of Commons, not very long ago, in which he once again recurred to this subject, and said :

“We attach great value,” said Mr. Gladstone, “to the extension—perhaps I should say to the establishment—(hear, hear)—of the principles of local government in Ireland. We believe that one of the great evils

under which Ireland labours is the want of local administration, and a more central system of authority. We believe that the state of Ireland never can be satisfactory until its people have acquired and learned by tradition and practice to exercise those powers of local government which were so beneficial in other portions of the Empire. Moreover, we believe that where the Irish people had the opportunity within a limited range of giving proof of their powers and qualities and capabilities for local government, as they have done under the Poor Law Acts, and through some other channels, they have administered well. Indeed, no one can doubt that, or their perfect capacity for such a duty. But this is speaking on the question of purely local administration. The motion of my honourable friend embraces matters of wider scope. I wish to point out to those honourable gentlemen that neither they, nor so far as I know Mr. Butt before them, nor so far as I know Mr. O'Connell before him, ever distinctly explained in an intelligent and practical form the manner in which the real knot of this question was to be untied. The principle on which they profess to proceed is, that purely Irish matters are to be dealt with by a purely Irish authority, Imperial matters to be left to the Imperial authority of a Chamber in which Ireland is to be represented. But they have not told us by what authority it is to be determined which matters, taken one by one, are Irish, and which matters are Imperial. Until they lay before the House a plan in which they go to the very bottom of the question, and give us to understand in what manner that division is to be accomplished, the practical consideration of this subject cannot really be arrived at, and I know not how any effective judgment upon it can be pronounced. I am well convinced that neither this Parliament nor any other House of Commons will at any time assent to any measure by which the one paramount centre of authority necessary for holding together in perfect unanimity and compactness this great Empire can possibly be in the slightest degree impaired. (Ministerial and Opposition cheers.) We are entitled and bound to ask a clear and explicit explanation as to the mode in which that vital matter is to be determined. Who is to say what purposes are Imperial? Who is to determine the circumscription within which the Irish authority is to have a final voice? Quotations have been made in reference to the positions of other countries—for example, Finland in relation to Russia. But this affords no practical illustration of the matter. It would be just as rational for those gentlemen to quote the case of the Channel Islands. With regard to the Isle of Man, we have sometimes interfered in the matter of Custom duties, but not in my recollection have we interfered in the legislation of the Channel Islands. We have left it entirely to their own authority, and we have not felt any inconvenience flow from that arrangement. Thus while some development is given to the principle of local government without any practical inconvenience, I think the case of Finland and Russia is not different from the case presented by England and the Channel Islands. The case of Austria and Hungary has also been cited. I fully grant that the magnitude of that case is such that if you can, by the development of that case, show it affords a precedent for us, you certainly make out a strong case. I have heard of the alleged and the great and paramount difficulty of this question to which I have just referred, namely, the establishment of a dividing and a divided authority—as in the case of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—by a reference of the matter to the personal authority of the Sovereign. If that be so, am I really to understand that it is the proposal of those members of this House who take the view I am now referring to, that the personal authority of a Sovereign in this country is to decide the question of what subjects are to be referred to the Parliament of Ireland and what subjects are to be referred to the Imperial Parliament of this country? If that is the doctrine held, then I say you are immediately involved in a dilemma more hopeless than any that has presented itself to you, because on the one hand the subjects are to be decided on the authority of responsible Ministers, or on the other hand by a personal will or whim. If the decision is to be determined on

the authority of responsible Ministers—the responsible Ministers of Great Britain or the responsible Ministers of Ireland who are to exist under the plan that is now proposed (hear, hear), evidently you can't refer to the responsible Ministers of Great Britain the power of drawing a distinction which involves the most vital, delicate and practical parts of the subject. Then, if in the highest and nicest matter of government you are going again to set up the personal responsibility of the Sovereign apart from the advice of responsible Ministers, you are at once proposing a revolution in this country more profound than you need bring about by the establishment of any form of government whatever. (Hear, hear.) I express for myself, and I am sure for my colleagues, that we are most favourable to the introduction of a rightly understood principle of local government in Ireland, and most desirous to promote it. For the first of the purposes they have in view they cannot take the first step, they cannot establish one foot of ground upon which and from which to address their arguments to the House of Commons, until they have proposed a plan in which it shall be clearly set forth by what authority, by what machinery, they mean to divide Imperial and local questions, and so to give satisfaction to the members of this House upon its first and most paramount duty, namely, the maintaining of the supremacy of the Imperial authority for every practical purpose relating to the interests and the purposes of this great Empire." (Cheers.)

Now, Sir, in that speech, while announcing once again his adhesion to the principle of local government, that great statesman has endeavoured to shift from the shoulders of the responsible Government of the Empire to the shoulders of those who are in a hopeless minority a question which it belongs to that Government to solve. I say that it belongs to those who are responsible for the good government of the Empire, who have the majority, who have the power, who can initiate legislation themselves,

TO GRAPPLE WITH THE DIFFICULTY.

I say that those who admit that the present system is unjust, who admit that the present condition of Ireland cannot be satisfactory without some change, who acknowledge that a change can and ought to be made, are in an untenable position when they tell the minority: "Gentlemen, come forward, propound some plan, solve every difficulty, tell us how you would settle this question, and until you do that we are not called upon to act." That is not, in my opinion, language worthy of any statesman, be he Conservative or Reformer. It is not upon such a system that the Irish question can be settled. It would be folly to blink the consideration that any measure that Mr. Gladstone may propose on this question might be unsatisfactory to many, and at any rate would not be accepted by all the Irish people as a final settlement of the question. But I maintain that the longer you delay, the greater the difficulties; and I assert that though the proposition you are able to propose may not be satisfactory to all, that is no ground whatever for declining to do that which you yourself acknowledge it is just should be done. True justice will do that which is right, and will give that measure of relief which

it knows is proper, and thus will result that added measure of safety and security which should flow from the changed state of affairs when many reasonable men, now complaining, shall be enlisted by the concession on the side of order. What is the present state of affairs? The Prime Minister of England says the condition of Ireland is unsatisfactory, because the Irish people have not the measure of local government which they ought to have, and he says: "I will not give that measure of local government to you; I will not stir hand or foot in the matter until the Irish members in the House of Commons, who are in the minority, and are powerless to do anything, shall propose a measure which shall be satisfactory to themselves and to me, and I call on them to undertake to deal with this complicated and exacerbated question, so full of difficulties growing out of all the errors and circumstances of the past."

It being six o'clock, the Speaker left the chair.

AFTER RECESS.

Mr. BLAKE—I will not engage in a discussion of the various hypothetical cases and somewhat strained difficulties which it seems to me are suggested in Mr. Gladstone's speech. I frankly admit that the division of power between the local and federal authorities is one of them, and a very serious one; but how there can be a difficulty in deciding the mode by which that is to be regulated, in determining that it is to be regulated by the Act of Parliament which creates the new system, I cannot at all see. There can be no doubt whatever that the real difficulty which occurred to the Prime Minister on this occasion was the same which he has entertained and expressed so freely—was that same difficulty which has prevented justice being done to Ireland in former years and under other circumstances; it was the difficulty of having to deal with a recalcitrant and inert mass of public opinion, not sufficiently advanced to enable him to grapple with the subject. To him I believe the words of the great poet of the adjoining Republic apply when he says:

" His statecraft was the golden rule,
His right of vote a sacred trust;
Clear above threat and ridicule,
All heard his challenge, 'Is it just?'"

I believe that a love of justice and of generous and liberal treatment is an instinct, I might say, of that statesman's nature; but he must be sustained, his hands must be held up, in order to give him the power to accomplish the task which, though advanced in years, it remains for him to do in order to crown a noble life spent in the service of his country. The hon. gentleman who moved the resolution (Mr. Costigan) said that

SCOTLAND WAS ALSO MOVING

on the subject. Within the last few days a very important meeting has been held, which came to the conclusion to ask for a Local Legislature for Scotland, with triennial elective Parliaments; and there can be no doubt that, notwithstanding the remarkable business tact and talent by which the Scotch business has been managed in Parliament, there have been great and injurious defects and delays in the management of that business. What has been accomplished has been accomplished by a sort of imperfect federation in that regard. We know that, in regard to all Scotch parliamentary measures, the Scotch members have met together and agreed as to what was wanted for their country, and what was agreed upon has generally been passed through Parliament, unless it trenched upon the prejudices and views of others, almost without debate. They have not succeeded in all things; they have not succeeded in many important things. They have had strong fights when questions came up which involved, by analogy, interests in other parts of the United Kingdom; but they have done much, and this agitation in Scotland, where they have so much less to complain of than in Ireland, cannot fail to have an important influence in maturing public opinion on the Irish question. I maintain that the English Parliament cannot deal efficiently with these questions; that as well from lack of knowledge and sympathy, as in consequence of being, as Mr. Gladstone has said, wholly overweighted with work, it is not competent, and its incompetency has been proved and confessed by the present Premier, to deal satisfactorily with these questions. Let the British people then give to the Irish people

THIS LEGITIMATE VENT

for their somewhat restless energies, and utilize them in the legitimate occupation of dealing with their own concerns. I have once again to trouble the House with another extract from a still later speech by Mr. Gladstone. Speaking in Parliament, that gentleman said only the other day:

Sir, this is a subject on which I have very distinct and clear opinions, which I have never scrupled to declare. They are not shared by many gentlemen; probably in this House they may be considered of a speculative character, and it is highly unlikely that I shall ever be called upon to take a practical part in any matter relating to these opinions; but I have the very strongest opinions upon the advantages of local government, and I have the strongest objections to the tendency which I see constantly prevailing to centralization. Not for Ireland merely, but for England, I would take and profess it at all points a cardinal rule of policy, so far as I can with safety to the general structure of the empire, to decentralize Parliament. We believe that the institution of secondary and local authorities in a country is a great source of strength; and that in principle the only necessary limit to these powers is an adequate and necessary provision for the supremacy of the central authority. (Hear, hear.) I believe that when the demand is made from Ireland for bring-

ing purely Irish affairs more specially or more largely under Irish control outside the walls of Parliament, the wise way to meet that demand will not be the method recommended by the member for the University of Dublin, who, if I understood him aright, said that anything recognizing purely Irish control for purely Irish affairs must be necessarily a step towards separation, and must therefore be fraught with danger. (Opposition cheers.) That I do not believe to be either a wise or a just method of dealing with that demand. In my opinion the wise and the just method is to require that before any such plan can be dealt with, or can be examined with the view of being dealt with on its merits, we must ask those who propose it—and this is the question I have invariably put—“What are the provisions which you propose to make for the supremacy of Parliament?” That has been my course, and that is the course I intend to pursue. I am bound to say I have not received an answer to that question. I have never heard in the time of Mr. Butt, or from the mouth of any other gentleman, any adequate or satisfactory explanation upon that subject. To this declaration I have only one limitation more to add, and that is, I am not prepared to give to Ireland anything which in point of principle it would be wrong to give to Scotland, if Scotland ask for it. (Home Rule cheers.) That is, I apprehend, what Irish members, those members of the most popular classes, will be ready to accept. (Cheers.) The right hon. gentleman was determined to make out that these declarations on my part were a formidable novelty, and he said he believed I had in Mid-Lothian—the scene of so many misdeeds (laughter)—and likewise at the Guildhall, which might have been considered a more consecrated precinct—delivered opinions of this kind. Well, I cannot recall all the speeches I have delivered on the subject, but I have taken the pains to recall six of them—(laughter)—which seems to me a very tolerable allowance. One was made in 1872, at Aberdeen, when I was Prime Minister. The next was in 1879, in Mid-Lothian, and another was made in the Guildhall in 1881. But the three speeches made out of Parliament were balanced by three made in Parliament, for in 1872 as Prime Minister I made a reply to Mr. Butt precisely in the same spirit of the declarations I have now made, and in the spirit of the sentences I uttered last week. I did the same in 1874, when I was not Prime Minister, but leader of the Opposition; and I did the same thing in 1880, when I sat on these benches as an independent member. Perhaps I may be allowed to read a few words of that speech. My hon. friend the member for Cork (Mr. Shaw), in the beginning of 1880, on the 27th of February, made a remarkable speech upon this question. He made a proposition which I could not accept any more than I could accept the proposition of my hon. friend the member for Tipperary (Mr. P. J. Smyth) the other night, and, professing himself an advocate of what I think he termed Home Rule, argued for it and pleaded for it in a spirit which I own won my sympathy and regard, and I did not hesitate, as I do not now, to use these words. [The hon. gentleman then quoted the words, in which he said that from the tone of the hon. member's remarks, if the relations between England and Ireland were to become satisfactory, the most important contribution to that essential end would have been made by Mr. Shaw.] That was the spirit in which I received the declaration made by the hon. member as leader—for he then was leader of the party from Ireland—and every one of the speeches to which I have referred is, I believe, in complete and exact conformity with the brief outline of my opinions upon this question.”

Now, Sir, I have read that speech for two or three reasons. First of all, because you will observe that the Prime Minister, after an interval of reflection, comment and criticism, reiterates the demand, as an essential condition preliminary to any action on this subject, that a satisfactory solution of all these difficulties should be propounded by those who ask for it on the Home

Rule benches. Therefore we find the suggestion that it should stand until a day which may never come. Secondly, there is the repetition of a declaration which he says he has made for ten years, and therefore we find no advance in his views upon this question. Lastly, and most important, we find him using those same fatal words under colour of which Irish questions, as I have proved, have been always postponed until the day of grace and greatest utility has passed: "This is not a practical question. I do not expect to be called upon to deal with it." I cannot agree with this view. I say it is a practical, a burning question. It is the most practical and burning question we can conceive; and when the Minister has stated that the results are not satisfactory as they stand, that there ought to be a change, that there ought to be a grant of local rights and privileges, that justice demands it, and that it cannot be expected that the Irish people will be satisfied unless the Parliament of the United Kingdom discharges that duty, then, I say, justice demands that those who have the power and the responsibility should propound that legislation. Now, Sir, I come to the consideration of

ANOTHER BRANCH OF THIS QUESTION,

and that is whether we have any interest in this question calling upon us to interfere in it; and I deal with that branch of the question now, partly because the hon. gentleman has alluded to it, and partly because it is not the first occasion on which a great Irish question has come under the consideration of this House and has been treated by this House in one way or another. I alluded a while ago to the question of the disestablishment of the Irish Church as one of vast importance both in its direct and indirect relations to the condition of Ireland, and it happened that while that question was under debate in the old land a late respected member of this House, the Hon. Mr. Holton, seconded by Mr. Mackenzie, moved on the 31st of May, 1869:

"That this House will immediately resolve itself into a Committee to consider the following proposed resolutions:

"1. That in the opinion of this House the measure now pending before the Imperial Parliament for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church will, if it becomes law, by the removal of one of the chief causes of the deeply-rooted discontents which have long existed among a numerous body of Her Majesty's subjects, promote the tranquillity, increase the prosperity, and add immeasurably to the strength as well as the just renown of the great Empire of which this Dominion forms no inconsiderable part.

"2. That this opinion is strengthened and supported by the recent experience of the late Province of Canada; for the controversies which had during many years disturbed that Province and retarded its progress were finally and happily terminated in 1854 by an Act of the Provincial Legislature, bearing a close resemblance in its essential features to the measure now before the Imperial Parliament.

"3. That a loyal and dutiful address, founded on the foregoing reso-

lutions, be presented to Her Majesty the Queen, and that a Special Committee of Members be appointed to prepare an address and report the same."

To this the hon. gentleman the present Prime Minister moved, seconded by Sir George Cartier, the previous question, and the previous question was upon that occasion carried by the hon. gentleman with the assistance of his supporters, against the vote of the Liberal party. The hon. gentleman supported his motion for the previous question by a speech. He is reported as follows :

"Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD replied that he did not doubt that the hon. gentleman was influenced by patriotic motives, but it was quite certain that his object was just as mischievous as his mode of bringing it up. The hon. member appeared to give up the whole case when he admitted that, as a matter of legislation, we had no right to deal with it. The Parliament of the Dominion, he acknowledged, was only authorized to pass laws for the good order and peace of Canada. Therefore, the hon. member said that all we could do was to give a simple expression of opinion—nay, more, that we should not do so ordinarily, except on important occasions, or in respect to a matter of supreme necessity. Now, the question immediately suggested itself—Where was the necessity for the present motion? The measure has been approved by the public opinion of Great Britain—it had been sanctioned by an overwhelming majority of the House of Commons, and the hon. gentleman himself had been certain that the House of Lords, in due submission to the popular sentiment, would agree to its passage. Now, surely, it was an extraordinary course on the part of the hon. member to ask the House to deal with a matter with which it had no concern, and render itself amenable to the answer that 'it should mind its own business.' The hon. member acknowledged that our Parliament should not deal with such a matter except in a case of supreme necessity.

"Hon. Mr. HOLTON—I said on a question of supreme importance to the Empire.

"Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD—There was no supreme necessity for the motion—it was not of supreme importance to the Empire what our opinions on such a question might be—whether we were favourable or opposed to the disestablishment of the Church in Ireland. The hon. member had asserted that we were in the habit of passing addresses to the Sovereign on matters of interest affecting herself or family. Now, the Queen of England was the Sovereign of Canada, and every one had an interest in herself and family. In the very Act of Confederation, the first clause (sanctioned by the British Parliament) declared that the Sovereign of Great Britain and Ireland shall be our own Sovereign for all time to come; and, therefore, it was quite within the limits of our jurisdiction and propriety to refer to matters connected with the prosperity and happiness of her family. The hon. member had also said that we had expressed an opinion respecting peace and war; but every one would see that the moment such a state of things arose, every section of the Empire was virtually affected. Therefore, as loyal and devoted subjects, it was our duty and interest to sympathize with the heart of the Empire. But in the case of the present question neither our loyalty nor our interest was at stake. He for one would not go into the discussion of the merits of the measure—he would not say whether it was good or not, for it was not the place to debate it. The hon. member had no right to force an expression of opinion in the Canadian Parliament, and he must have known that there was a very considerable and respectable minority in the country immediately affected who received the Bill with heartburning and the deepest dissatisfaction. The people of Canada lived in harmony and peace; we had no religious or other antipathies to excite us; and yet the hon. gentleman wished to transfer to the

Dominion the heartburnings and animosities of the Old World. If the policy of the hon. member were sanctioned then we should see the sad spectacle of different religious sects in this country coming forward and embodying their respective feelings on this vexed question. The hon. member had not even assumed to discuss the merits of the question—to go into details, and show that it was worthy of the support of the House. Yet he was calling upon the House to express a decided opinion on a question respecting which it had only a general idea. There could only be one object in such a motion, and that was to create an ill-feeling between the Protestants and Catholics—to bring discord into this now happy country. It was quite obvious that, if the course of the honourable member was legitimate, then it would be within the province of the Legislature to deal with the Reform Bill, and other questions of equal importance affecting Great Britain. On the same principle the House would be found interfering in the affairs of Spain, and referring to her ecclesiastical establishments. Nay, more, the Parliament of the Dominion, with equal justice, might be called upon to give a strong expression of sentiment respecting separate schools, or church endowing, or other matters of interest to the people of Lower Canada. In whatsoever light he viewed the question he could not avoid seeing the impropriety of the motion brought forward by the hon. member for Chateaugay, and was convinced that the House would deal with it promptly and effectually, so as to prevent the introduction of similar resolutions in the future. In conclusion, he would move the previous question in amendment to the motion before the House."

Now, Sir, I maintain that the hon. gentleman was on that occasion mistaken as to the real feelings and sentiments of the great majority of the Canadian people. I believe that so far from that motion being, as the hon. gentleman said, calculated to excite discord, heartburnings and religious difficulties, we would have all agreed—had he himself but seen the question in another light—in favour of the proposed solution of that question, just as we had agreed in the old Province of Canada, however lively were the feelings of religious difference in that old Province when we settled a somewhat similar question. I refer, Sir, to this statement because I wish to express the hope that, in the interval between 1869 and 1882, the hon. gentleman has advanced in his views, has observed the current of events, and will now be disposed to take a different line, and instead of acting on the precedent which he himself then created by moving the previous question, in order, as he stated, that there should be an effectual barrier to similar resolutions in the future, he may be disposed to admit

OUR RIGHT TO TENDER SOME ADVICE

on this occasion, and give his support to the motion before the House. I say we have an interest, as a part of the great Empire—as sharers in its prosperity, as sharers in its shame; we have an interest in everything which will tend to develop the strength and the unity of that Empire; we have an interest in every great and important question affecting the general constitution and organization of the Empire at large. Nobody can doubt that, through chaos and without any formal system, the gradual tendency of the constitution of the Empire has been

more and more—mainly through drift, sometimes of design—towards the adoption of the federative form. We ourselves in Canada are the outcrop of that idea. Our present position is due to its partial, unsymmetrical, unreasoned, but practical development ; and I say, Sir, we must conclude that, without power effectually to interfere, without power of legislation, we yet have a right,

AS MEMBERS OF THE EMPIRE,

to express an opinion upon this subject. As a part of the Empire largely peopled by old countrymen—by Englishmen, Irishmen and Scotchmen—we have a deep interest in a question which must materially affect the prosperity and happiness of our countrymen and kinsmen in the old land. As a country wanting immigrants, as the hon. gentleman has said, we have a material interest to a very great degree. We all know where the Irish emigration goes ; we all know that those who cross the sea and land upon the shores of America go almost wholly, particularly those of the Roman Catholic faith, to the United States instead of to Canada ; we know that our share of the Irish emigration is insignificant, and that our share of the Irish Roman Catholic emigration is but a very small proportion in these latter days of even our share of the total Irish emigration. We know, on the other hand, that enormous numbers of that people have gone to the United States. When I said two years ago that that was due largely to the difficulties to which I referred, and expressed the hope that a better feeling might be engendered by remedial measures applied to the state of Ireland, hon. gentlemen opposite did not seem to sympathize with that remark. I was glad to hear the hon. gentleman repeat it to-day, and I hope it has become, to a large extent, the accepted sentiment of the people of this country. We are interested materially in another sense in this question.

WE AND OUR NEIGHBOURS

have a common frontier 3,000 miles in length. The Republic is, and must always be, a country in our cordial and friendly relations with which must lie a great part of our own prosperity ; and no man can doubt that the existence of the Irish question is a main feature of the difficulties between the United Kingdom and the United States, and that it cannot but react most unfavourably upon us. We recollect what has happened in former days ; we recollect when our peace was broken, our territory more than once invaded, when expense was incurred and blood was shed ; we recollect that such a state of things existed in the United States that redress, whether by expression of regret or by pecuniary compensation, was absolutely denied, on the score, I presume, that the state of feeling in that country rendered it impossible for any such concession to be made. If

you look at some of the figures of the recent census you will see how, directly and indirectly—directly, as wanting immigrants ourselves; indirectly, as men with whom the people of the United States should be on friendly terms—we are interested in this question. Take the State of Massachusetts, in which, out of a population of 1,625,000, the foreign-born people, if I remember rightly, number some 420,000 souls, and of these no less than about 240,000 were born in Ireland; so that more than one-half of the foreign-born population of the State of Massachusetts is of Irish birth, while if you add to those the number who are the descendants of Irishmen in that State, you will see what a powerful factor in the prosperity and progress of that country is the Irish immigration. Of that immigration

WE WANT A SHARE FOR OURSELVES.

and we want still more earnestly that those who choose the Republic instead of the Dominion shall not choose the Republic with feelings of animosity and disaffection towards the Empire of which we form a part, but with those friendly feelings which animate the Englishmen and Scotchmen who also happen to prefer, for material reasons, the Republic to the Dominion. Now, Sir, there is another reason why we should interfere. We can speak with authority on this subject; we are Federalists ourselves; we are experienced in the benefits of Home Rule; we know what it means; we know that it is our most precious possession; we know that there is nothing that we would part with with greater reluctance or more difficulty than

OUR PORTION OF HOME RULE;

we know that there is nothing that we would sacrifice more to retain than our portion of Home Rule, whether you refer to that portion which the Dominion has in relation to the Empire, or that portion which the Provinces have in relation to the Dominion. In reference to either the imperfect federation which exists between Canada and the United Kingdom, or the more perfect form of federation which exists between the Dominion and the Provinces, if any people in the wide world can speak of the difficulties engendered from the want of Home Rule, and the benefits to be secured by the grant of Home Rule, it is the people in whose name and for whose interests we sit and deliberate in this hall this night. Now, Sir, the descendant of Irishmen myself—my grandfather by the father's side a rector of the church to which I have referred, and sleeping in his parish churchyard, and my ancestor by my mother's side slain in conflict with insurgents—while it might have been my misfortune, had I been born and bred in the old land, to adopt from prejudice views very different from those I have expressed this night, yet, it being my good fortune to have been born and bred in the free air of Canada,

and to have learned those better, those wiser, those more Christian and just notions which here prevail upon the subjects of civil and religious liberty, class legislation, and Home Rule itself, I have always entertained, ever since I have had the opportunity of thinking on this subject, the sentiments to which I have given feeble utterance this evening. I believe that these are the sentiments native to

OUR OWN SENSE OF FREEDOM AND JUSTICE.

of forbearance and toleration, and that we wish to deal on this subject, as the hon. gentleman said who moved it, in that spirit which says, "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you." I had been anxious that this discussion should be raised, and had myself prepared a motion on the subject when private circumstances called me from my desk here. On my return I learnt that the gentlemen to whom the hon. member for Victoria has alluded had taken the matter in hand, and it was thought better not to meddle with them, or with the course that they, under his leadership, might propose. But, although I remained silent, I must say that I think that it would be doing but scant justice to the feeling of Canadians, French, Scotch, English or Irish, to suppose that there is any material difference in their feeling on this subject from that of those whom the hon. gentleman who brought forward the motion more particularly seems to represent. I believe our sentiments are based on the general principles of political action to which we have been educated, and which have advanced our prosperity and our intellectual and moral standing in the world. Now, I heard the hon. gentleman's resolution with some regret—for one reason, that I find it emasculated. I find it very much weaker than the resolution which he put on the paper in the first instance. In some particulars it does not suit my view. He has fallen into something like the error ascribed to Mr. Gladstone, but, not willing to repeat that error, I myself prefer to vote for the best resolution we can get. Yet

I WILL VOTE WITH RELUCTANCE

for the motion, which only hypothetically refers to the grant of a measure of self-government to Ireland. The hon. gentleman says in the altered resolution :

"And we would venture to express a hope that, if consistent with the integrity and well-being of the Empire, and if the rights and status of the minority are fully protected and secured, some means may be found of meeting the expressed desire of so many of your Irish subjects in that regard.

"We would further express a hope that the time has come when your Majesty's clemency may, without injury to the interests of the United Kingdom, be extended to those persons who are now imprisoned in Ireland charged with political offences only, and the inestimable blessing of personal liberty be restored to them."

We have no idea that the rights and interests of the minority will be other than fully protected and secured. I believe that their best security is to be found in a united Irish people, managing their own affairs. I say that the passage of such a measure is essential to the integrity of the Empire. There ought to be no "ifs" or "ands" in the expression of the views of the Canadian people upon this most important subject. It is only upon the theory, only upon the strong view, that the passage of such a law is essential to the integrity of the Empire that we can agitate or act with effect in dealing with this matter. I am not disposed to speak hypothetically. I am not disposed to deal with this question with "ifs" and "ands." I am willing to advise absolutely conciliatory measures and ample justice to Ireland. I should like the Canadian people, through their representatives in Parliament, to say to the Imperial Government, respectfully, but firmly and plainly, that, as 4,000,000 of British subjects, they believe that the integrity of the Empire demands

SELF-GOVERNMENT FOR IRELAND.

So with reference to the clause that speaks of those men deprived of the constitutional right of trial by jury. I do not understand them to invite the clemency of the Crown. I do not understand them to be charged with political offences. I understand them to be imprisoned under a law which does not call on the Government to charge them with any crime whatever. What we ought to have asked for those men is the restoration of the *habeas corpus*, and a trial by their peers on any charge which the Government of England may think fit to make against them. It is not an application for clemency and mercy that they make, or that we should express, but a hope that the ordinary constitutional right of every British subject may be extended to these particular British subjects—namely, the right of *habeas corpus* and of trial by their peers for any offence with which they may be charged against the law of the land to which they belong. I hope that the resolution, weak as it is, unsatisfactory as it is; failing, as in my opinion it does, in those two points; framed as it is in a manner which I do not myself admire, will yet pass; because it is not amendable, and it is infinitely better that it should pass than that it should be rejected because some may think it too weak and others too strong. In this question I have shown we are interested in many ways, and that, although we have no direct voice in the legislation of Great Britain, we have notwithstanding a right to venture our counsel and express our views. We have a right respectfully to approach our Sovereign and strengthen the hands of her Prime Minister, whose sentiments are not hostile, but are favourable to reform. We are entitled to give the influence of 4,000,000 of British subjects to the redress of

grievances too long maintained, to the attainment of rights too long denied, and so to enlarge the strength and increase the unity of the mighty Empire of which we form a part.

(On sitting down the hon. gentleman received an ovation of applause from both sides of the House.)

The following is the resolution moved by Mr. Costigan, to which Mr. Blake spoke:

That an humble Address be presented to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, in the following words:

Most Gracious Sovereign:

We, your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of Canada, in Parliament assembled, desire most earnestly, in our own name, and on behalf of the people whom we represent, to renew the expression of our unswerving loyalty and devotion to your Majesty's person and Government.

1. We have observed, may it please Your Majesty, with feelings of profound regret and concern, the distress and discontent which have prevailed for some time among Your Majesty's subjects in Ireland.

2. We would respectfully represent to Your Majesty that your Irish subjects in the Dominion of Canada are among the most loyal, most prosperous, and most contented of Your Majesty's subjects.

3. We would further respectfully represent to Your Majesty that the Dominion of Canada, while offering the greatest advantages and attractions for those of our fellow-subjects who may desire to make their homes amongst us, does not receive that proportion of emigrants from Ireland which might reasonably be expected, and that this is due, in a great measure, in the case of many of our Irish fellow-subjects who have sought foreign homes, to their feelings of estrangement towards the Imperial Government.

4. We would further most respectfully represent to Your Majesty that, in the interests of this your loyal Dominion and of the entire Empire, it is extremely to be desired that Your Majesty may not be deprived, in the development of Your Majesty's possessions on this continent, of the valuable aid of those of Your Majesty's Irish subjects who may feel disposed to leave their native land to seek more prosperous homes.

5. We desire respectfully to suggest to Your Majesty that Canada and its inhabitants have prospered exceedingly under a Federal system, allowing to each Province of the Dominion considerable powers of self-government, and would venture to express a hope that, if consistent with the integrity and well-being of the Empire, and if the rights and status of the minority are fully protected and secured, some means may be found of meeting the expressed desire of so many of your Irish subjects in that regard, so that Ireland may become a source of strength to Your Majesty's Empire, and that Your Majesty's Irish subjects at home and abroad may feel the same pride in the greatness of Your Majesty's Empire, the same veneration for the justice of Your Majesty's rule, and the same devotion to and affection for our common flag, as are now felt by all classes of Your Majesty's loyal subjects in this Dominion.

6. We would further express a hope that the time has come when Your Majesty's clemency may, without injury to the interests of the United Kingdom, be extended to those persons who are now imprisoned in Ireland charged with political offences only, and the inestimable blessing of personal liberty restored to them.

We pray that the blessings of Your Majesty's reign may, for your people's sake, be long continued.

